



LEXINGTON

Division of Youth Services

*Urban County Council Work Session
March 11, 2025*

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Department of Social Services
Marjorie Guyon, I Was Here Project
Roberta Davis, Operation Be You, Inc.*





Mission Statement & Overview of Services

- To provide quality services the community by providing personnel and comprehensive programs committed to the core values of our agency.
- Youth services provides numerous services, which include prevention, intervention, advocacy, and support services.
 - CASA of Lexington-provides advocacy in dependency court for abused and neglected children.
 - Juvenile Probation and Court Services-provides community-based support services to youth and their families in the juvenile court system.
 - Parent and Guardian Empowerment-provides intensive case management and support services to youth and their families in the truancy and family court system.





New Delinquency Prevention and Recidivism Reduction Initiative



Delinquency prevention and recidivism reduction program to help youth avoid illegal or antisocial behaviors through mentoring, skill-building workshops, and community interventions.

This initiative focuses on reflecting on youths' ancestry to bring about self-awareness, leading to finding their voices. leads to being a positive community leader and decreasing the possibility of delinquency and/or recidivism.





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I Was Here Project





I Was Here Project History

- The I Was Here project began in 2016 as a set of emblematic Ancestor Spirit Portraits created by photographing contemporary African Americans as archetypal Ancestor Spirits. The portraits embody the dignity of the African American individual and family – imagery mostly missing in America’s visual history.
- Through a synthesis of art, technology and history, the project is an invitation to examine our American history and bring a new understanding to the concept of nation building. Truly understanding our history is the gateway to creatively conceive how we can honor the cofounders of our country and transform how we see ourselves and each other.





I Was Here Project History

- In 2019, Spirit Portraits were installed in the windows at the Government Center.





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Operation Be You, Inc.





Operation Be You, Inc.

- OBY focuses on the development and empowerment of all girls, with an emphasis on girls of color in Lexington, KY and the surrounding counties. We offer in-person and virtual programs for girls, worldwide!
- Our goal is to teach girls 10-17 years of age to be socially and economically successful through mentoring, career coaching and life-skills development!





Operation Be You, Inc.

- In the Spring of 2024, Operation Be You, Inc. began a new program, “A Journey to Find Me”, that focuses on self-awareness, self-love, and self-preservation.
- Marjorie Guyon, founder of the I Was Here Project, saw a social media post on Facebook about the OBY program and felt that her I Was Here, “Invitation to Respond” workshop would be a great addition to the program.
- The workshop was introduced as part of our self-awareness piece.





Operation Be You, Inc.

- Workshops
 - Introduction to I Was Here-Nation Builders
 - Focused on educating the participants on the impact of African Americans in Lexington, KY, as well as the United States as nation builders.
 - Narrative Discussions, Drafts, and Sharing
 - Focused on creating a narrative in written form to share with the group.
 - Parent's Workshops
 - Parents were so intrigued by what their daughters shared with them about the workshops, they asked for one of their own.
 - Community Workshops
 - OBY girls and parents volunteered to become "Ambassadors" for I Was Here-Nation Builders and teach the community.
 - Community Impact, Feedback, and Evaluation
 - The workshops were very impactful.
 - "I think the project is important, very timely and very needed in conversations today. I'm glad that young people have taken this as a project to embark on."
 - "I think this is a powerful way to change the narrative of African American stories. It also impacts members outside of the African American community."
 - "Empowering, powerful and full of young and up and coming leaders."





Presentation of Narratives

Descendants of Their Ancestors





New Delinquency Prevention and Recidivism Reduction Initiative



I WAS HERE-Nation Builders Workshops

- Youth Services will sponsor a series of workshops that will include:
 - 3 youth leadership workshops
 - 1 community presentation
 - 1 t-shirt per participant
 - Snacks/drinks per workshop

This leadership initiative, does not only embody self-awareness, but it is armed with many tools such as literacy, spoken word, self-esteem, and confidence; all leading to being a positive community leader and decreasing the possibility of juvenile delinquency and/or reducing recidivism.



Questions?



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